

Media Release

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Edward Hines, Jr. VA Hospital

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Hines VA Medication Takeback Day to Support Suicide Prevention

Limit & Secure Access Because Means Matters

Having the lethal means to complete suicide can be the difference between life and death. In fact, 90 percent of attempters who survive do not go on to die by suicide. Removing means and delaying attempts is often enough to overcome a short-term crisis, which is when many suicide attempts occur.

Edward Hines, Jr. VA Hospital is encouraging Veterans, employees, volunteers and our community partners to help remove means by disposing of unused, unwanted or expired prescription and over-the-counter drugs in a safe, convenient and responsible way.

On **Thursday, January 24, 2019** Hines VA will be accepting medications in **Building 1, F-Lobby from 8 a.m. – 2 p.m.**, with a program featuring hospital leadership and the Hines VA's Suicide Prevention Coordinators taking place at 12:30 p.m.

"Studies show that means matters. When lethal means are made less available or less deadly, suicide rates by that method decline, and frequently suicide rates overall decline," said Tom Nutter, M.D., Chief of Hines Mental Health Service. "Getting unnecessary narcotics and other medicines out of the home and putting gun locks on firearms really can make a difference. We all have a responsibility to do our part, and these are simple steps that we can take to help save lives."

Veterans can also bring medication to any one of the Hines community-based outpatient clinics in Aurora, Hoffman Estates, Joliet, Kankakee, LaSalle or Oak Lawn. Hines will announce additional takeback days that will be promoted throughout the year, but know that every day is a takeback day at Hines.

VA's suicide prevention efforts are guided by the [National Strategy for Preventing Veteran Suicide](#), a long-term plan published in 2018 that looks beyond the individual to involve peers, family members and communities to help solve the crisis.

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Hines VA engages the community in several ways, including outreach events and collaboration with VSOs and other community partners. Hines provides educational materials and gun locks that can be distributed to whoever needs them at gun ranges and retailers.

“Of the 20 Veterans who take their own lives each day, only six are receiving care through VA, said Steven Braverman, M.D., Hines VA Hospital director. “Suicide rates are higher for Veterans who don’t use VA services. We need to expand the work we do with community partners, Veterans Service Organizations, the state, county and local municipalities.”

VA has taken targeted actions with real results to prevent Veteran suicide, including the following:

- VA now provides mental health care in emergency situations for up to 90 days for Veterans with other than honorable discharges.
- VA is using innovative screening and assessment programs to identify at-risk Veterans. VA leads the way in providing access to mental health through TeleHealth appointments and recently announced partnerships with Walmart, Philips and T-Mobile to expand that access.
- A recent [Dartmouth study published in the Annals of Internal Medicine](#) shows that on key quality measures, VA hospitals outperform private hospitals in most health care markets throughout the country.
- Just last week, the [Journal of the American Medical Association \(JAMA\) published a study](#) showing that VA significantly reduced wait times for Veteran patients in primary care and three specialty care services between 2014 and 2017 with VA wait times for new appointments equal to or better than those in private sector.
- Hines will hold quarterly Medication Takeback Days here at Hines and is making mail-in options available from our community-based clinics.
- We expect to announce more community partnerships to better serve our Veterans.

Hines VA will have Suicide Prevention Coordinators on hand providing information about suicide prevention, items with the VA Crisis Hotline number and website, and free gun locks.

Talking about suicide prevention can be difficult, but being there for Veterans and service members isn’t. Learn all the ways you can #BeThere for someone who’s going through a difficult time: www.VeteransCrisisLine.net/BeThere If you need help, or know someone who does, the Veterans Crisis Line is available 24/7 at 1-800-273-8255, and press 1. Suicide prevention: it’s everyone’s business.

ABOUT HINES

[Edward Hines, Jr. VA Hospital](#) is one of VA’s busiest and most complex medical centers, offering primary, extended and specialty care to Veterans. Hines VA is a tertiary care referral center for its region, operating 483 beds and six community-based outpatient clinics in Hoffman Estates, Kankakee, Oak Lawn, Aurora, LaSalle, and Joliet. In 2018, Hines VA completed more than 850,000 appointments for approximately 58,000 Veterans.